



Tips for Success Stories and Photo Documentation

The NPS Fire Program has an *excellent* history of successful program management. Telling the “world” about our program is critical to our continued success. It allows us to build support from all of our constituents (internal and external.) Subsequently, this support allows us to maintain, if not increase, funding.

There have been a number of *outstanding* stories and photographic portrayals of our successes in fire. More are always welcome. Stories can be told about fuels projects, rural fire assistance, public programs and outreach in the community, sharing successes regarding recruitment efforts, and just about anything else you can think of. The following tips were developed to help you tell your fire program success story. See the reverse side of this page for a sample success story.

Story content:

- Write the story as you would for a newspaper or other publication - **use 3rd person (he, she, they)** instead of 1st person (I, we). Keep it simple - avoid jargon that only those in the fire community would understand.
- Press release format is an option to consider. If you have images in your press release, **please also attach image files separately**, and always include captions with the photos in the release. Send image files as tif or jpg.

Photo Documentation:

- When taking “before” and “after” photos, always use a photo point, which is a pre-determined point of reference for the viewer, and shoot the picture from the same location so you have the same scene (and the same photo point) portrayed. A photo point can be a structure, a satellite dish, a telephone pole, a temporary signpost or some other inanimate object. Photo points follow the same concept of scientific documentation.



- Digital photos are fine for use with small images on the website. For website use alone, images can be anywhere from 72-150 ppi (pixels per inch). 72 ppi is lower quality and does not enlarge well, 150 ppi is a medium quality.
- Photographic images for exhibits need to be much higher quality. If they are digital, they need to be the highest quality possible, such as 550 ppi. This allows for much less distortion and blurriness as images are enlarged. Slides and 35 mm images and negatives are preferable for use with exhibits because they can be scanned to a much higher quality level.



Small Park Accomplishes Big Goals



Pea Ridge National Military Park is situated in the mountains of northern Arkansas. With its Civil War significance, this park is sought out by historians, local residents, school groups, and visitors traveling across the country. Pea Ridge NMP is small when compared to larger NPS units, only having 4,300 acres and a staff of 10. Yet, this small park is accomplishing large-scale goals.

In February 2002, Pea Ridge NMP completed a 2,232 acre prescribed fire. These acres have added to the Midwest total of 13,015 acres burned as of

April 1, 2002. But aside from the fact that Pea Ridge is helping to fulfill regional and national fire targets, this park has a story to tell.

Pea Ridge NMP has worked hard to ensure that fire is a recurring part of the Park's landscape. Prescribed fires are conducted on a three to five year interval. This timeline has several measurable objectives; ensures that hazardous fuel accumulations do not occur, maintains the natural ecological balance that this fire regime requires, and restores a cultural landscape to a specific period in time, the Civil War battle of 1862.



Not only has the park been successful in accomplishing these burns, but it is an excellent example of people and resources working together. Pea Ridge, with its small staff would be unable to do such large-scale burns on its own.

However, with the help of additional resources: Buffalo National River staff, Buffalo Fire Use Module, local volunteer and rural fire departments, and USDA Forest Service staff, fire management goals are being accomplished in a safe and timely manner.

But something more is happening at Pea Ridge NMP other than the creation of a blackened landscape. Local communities and residents adjacent to the park are taking an interest in these burns. They realize the potential impacts of prescribed and wildland fires and are supporting the prescribed fire program Pea Ridge has established. Much of this community support has been initiated by Superintendent John Scott, "In my experience, the quickest thing to kill a prescribed fire program is smoke. And despite the burn bosses best efforts to keep smoke to a minimum, it still creeps into homes and communities. To say that we're burning for 'hazard fuel reduction' only goes so far."

So how does one develop community support for a prescribed fire program when smoke is such an issue? Superintendent John Scott states, "We needed to launch a large-scale marketing campaign and this campaign needed a theme. The theme that I developed was: Pea Ridge National Military Park is not a memorial made up of marble and stone – we are a memorial made up of living landscapes. And the results have been magical. This simple thought has inspired our park neighbors and community leaders. It has allowed them to choose not to be inconvenienced or put out by smoke because they know it is part of something bigger. And I believe that these are the messages we need to get across to people. We need to use prescribed fire within the National Park Service not just to reduce 'hazard fuels' but for something bigger, something less tangible."

Mr. Scott has become an advocate for prescribed fire and the NPS fire management program. Through his efforts and the work of his staff, this small park is sharing a very large and important message, a message that inspires and fosters community support.